

# AED/LearnLink

## IT Applications for Development

*AED/LearnLink uses information and communication technology (IT) to support development. Field activities are designed to increase access to IT, build capacity, and strengthen learning systems in all sectors. Activities range from establishing public access telecenters to enhancing teacher training, professional development, organizational networking, e-commerce, e-government, and institutional capacity building.*

Location:

**Keyword Identifiers:** bilateral partnerships, educational technology, teacher training, networking

**Purpose:** To enable exchanges of information and experience between US and Brazilian educators about the use of educational technologies. Through an interactive web site and training activities, the project also contributes to Brazil's program of integrating computers into schools.

**Description:** The US/Brazil Learning Technologies Network (LTNet) works with educators and national and local government professionals associated with Brazil's "Computers-in-Schools" program. The project collaborates with other public, private, and voluntary institutions and agencies and the private for-profit sector concerned with improving the quality and equity of education through the thoughtful use of information technology (IT).



ProInfo, a Brazilian Ministry of Education agency under the Secretariat for Distance Education (SEED), administers the "Computers-in-Schools" program, joining with state and municipal secretaries of education to establish computer labs in public schools. ProInfo has set up over 240 computer training and resource centers (NTEs) where "Multipliers," education technology specialists, conduct training programs for teachers. Using project-based learning approaches, the training enables teachers to develop critical technology skills and to integrate computer and Internet technologies into daily teaching and learning.

Through an interactive and bilingual web site ([www.ltnet.org](http://www.ltnet.org)) and face-to-face training workshops and seminars, LTNet promotes the effective use of computers and the Internet for education in Brazil and the US. The mix of activities offers multiple opportunities to build formal and informal relationships between educators in both countries. For example, LTNet's *SchoolLinks* program enables Brazilian teachers and students across the country to collaborate via multiple online multimedia tools. Similarly, LTNet's *Virtual Exchange Environment* (VEE) offers educators in both countries an integrated mix of electronic communication tools and technical support to establish collaborations that support project-based education.



*Training a team of ProInfo students*

LTNet's web site demonstrates how free and inexpensive tools can be used to strengthen education and make teaching and learning more collaborative, enriching, and enjoyable.

LTNet's web site and activities diffuse information about

educational technology in two large and socially complex countries. Beyond strengthening education, the project also encourages bilateral interpersonal communication about educational issues, bridges hemispheres by building trust and friendship between individuals with shared interests in education, and advances distance learning to meet educational needs.

**Outcomes:** Beyond its web site, LTNet undertakes face-to-face actions. As part of the US State Department's Fulbright Exchange Program, LTNet's Virtual Exchange Environment (VEE) provided multiple means for US and Brazilian teachers of English as a Second Language to communicate online. LTNet also conducted a study tour of new electronic media for educational television staff from Brazil's Ministry of Education and MultiRio, a government-funded, educational television organization in Rio de Janeiro. To improve school management, LTNet also trained Brazilian school principals to use electronic communication technologies.

In collaboration with ProInfo, LTNet developed learning materials and a training approach that helps teachers and students use Internet communication tools to enhance learning. As more and more teachers gain multimedia, interactive computer skills, IT integration into teaching and on-going professional development is ensured.

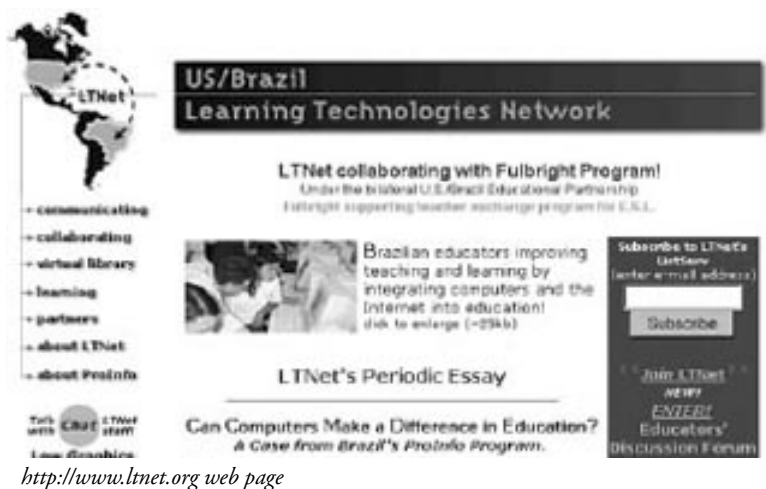


*Instruction session for teachers*

**Impact:** Within just two and half years, there is evidence that LTNet has achieved significant diffusion effects. A

growing number of teachers throughout Brazil are using the tools, resources, and LTNet-enabled networks to construct their own collaborations and creatively use their knowledge to change curriculum and pedagogy. Beyond its original conception as a web-based clearinghouse of information, LTNet has grown into a broad program benefiting students, teachers, and the public and private sectors. By focusing on the needs of teachers, it is enriching professional development opportunities and providing the potential for links among educators in other countries seeking to improve education through the use of computer and Internet technologies.

**Lessons Learned:** LTNet has developed national and bilateral partnerships that enable the project to quickly expand its outreach, popularity, and impact.



<http://www.ltnet.org> web page

The LTNet web site provides access to the following resources:

- a bilingual interface for Portuguese and English speakers;
- low and high resolution screens to accommodate users with slow Internet connections;
- a Virtual Library of educational technology topics;
- a 1,000-member *SchoolLinks* listserv;
- opportunities to access free online English language instruction for Brazilian member schools via collaboration with GlobalEnglish.Com;
- an extensive online publication area for posting projects from many teachers and students; and
- information on Brazil's ProInfo program.

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Dr. Dennis Foote  
Project Director  
(202) 884-8708  
dfoote@aed.org

Steven Dorsey  
Deputy Director  
(202) 884-8724  
sdorsey@aed.org



LearnLink Project, AED  
1825 Connecticut Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
Fax: (202) 884-8979  
Email: [learnlink@aed.org](mailto:learnlink@aed.org)  
[www.aed.org/learnlink](http://www.aed.org/learnlink)



Dr. Anthony Meyer  
G/HCD/BELS  
(202) 712-4137  
[ameyer@usaid.gov](mailto:ameyer@usaid.gov)

Stephen A. Tournas  
G/HCD/IT  
(202) 712-0154  
[stournas@usaid.gov](mailto:stournas@usaid.gov)